Novv or Never

Work out your Salvation with fear and trembling.

OR,

A serious Exhortation to all poor Sinners to lay hold upon Christ Jesus, who is the Fountain of all happiness, and who is the only Rock from whence doth spring all their comfort..

Herein is also laid down several Motives, declaring the necessity of this work, that it ought not to be put off for to morrow, but that every poor sinner should strive to enter in at the strait gate; now, whilst he hath an opportunity in his hand, lest he be snatch'd away by death, and then it will be too late.

The Nineteenth Edition, with Additions.

2 Cor. 6. 2. *Now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of Salvation.*

Mat. 25. 13. *Watch therefore, for ye know not neither the day, nor the hour, wherein the Son of Man cometh.*

By *E. R.*

London, Printed for *T. Passinger*, at the three Bibles, on *London-Bridge*. 1676.

Now or Never.

Heb. 3. From the 7th to the 16th verſe.

Wherefore as the Holy Ghoſt ſaith: To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderneſs, when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and ſaw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved for that Generation, and ſaid, they do always err in their Hearts, and they have not known my ways. So I ſwear in my wrath they ſhall not enter into my Reſt.

Take heed Brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to Day, leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin. For we are made partakers of Chriſt, if we hold the beginning of our confidence ſtedfaſt unto the end: Whilſt it is ſaid; To Day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation.

These words of the holy Apoſtle Paul, are a ſerious exhortation to all poor ſinners

to lay hold on Christ Jesus: we are stirred up speedily to believe in him: to day, while it is called to day, lest we by neglecting of this opportunity, and by our unbelief do incur a heavier and more sore judgement upon us, then hard hearted Israel did, who grieved Moses forty years together, and by reason of their unbelief, they did not enter into the rest that was promised them, but fell by the way of the wilderness.

Now then poor sinners, I would in this small treatise endeavour to stir you up to lay hold upon Christ Jesus, who is the fountain of all our happiness, who is the well-head from whence doth spring all our spiritual & temporal enjoyments, and the more earnestly to encourage you to lay hold on this your only supporter. I shall endeavor to lay down some motives to stir you up to this work: And that it may be done speedily, to Day while it is called to day, I shall desire you to read the words of Solomon the wisest of men, and best of Kings, as you shall find written in the 9th. of Ecclesiastes, verse 10. the words are these: Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.

The particular aim of Solomon in these words, are to shew that men are mortal, and

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that wisdom, piety, & riches, & all the earthly enjoyments that a poor soul can have in this life, it will not exempt him from death, all the Creature-comforts are but transitory: We are here to day and in the grave to morrow, therefore we have little reason to set our affections on things that are parting from us, or otherwise we are parting from them: but let us take the advice of the Apostle St. Paul, To set our affections on things above, and not on things that are beneath. Before I come to lay down the motives to stir you to the work you are to do. I shall lay down this general observation: which is;

Doct. That the work of this life cannot be done after this life is ended: therefore while we have time in this life we must use all diligence, to make our calling and election sure: To day, while it is called to day, harden not your hearts; This is the day, Now or never, there is no repentance in the grave: the grave hath no work, but Heaven hath work, and Hell hath suffering: Now to entice you to this work let me tell you:

First, know that time cannot be recalled, that which was once will be no more, yesterday will never come again, and this day is passing away, therefore work while you have day, the night will come, and then you cannot

work: 'Tis true, while the Candle burneth you may make use of its Light, but when that is done, it is too late to use it, the time that is now feasted and complimented away, the time that is unnecessarily sported and slept away, the time that is wickedly and presumptiously sined away, how precious would it one day seem to all! O how happy would it be to poor sinners, if at the dearest rate they could redeem it! but this cannot be.

If cries, or tears, or price, or pains, would bring back lost abused time, how happy were this dead-hearted world; if it would then serve their turn to say to the vigilant believers, Give us of your Oyl, for our Lamps are gone out; or to cry, Lord, Lord, open unto us, when the door is shut; the foolish would be saved as well as the wise: but they shall not attain salvation who have not striven in some measure to make use of their time to a better purpose than they have done, who have vainly and foolishly lost their precious hours after their vain delights, Mat. 25. This is the day of salvation, this is the accepted time, while it is called to day, hearken, and harden not your hearts.

Secondly, As time can never be recalled, so life shall never here below be restored, Job 14. 14. If a man dye, shall he live here again?

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All the days of our appointed time, we muſt therefore wait in faith and diligence till our change ſhall come. We have but one Life here upon earth to diſpatch the work that our everlaſting life dependeth upon, and if we looſe that, we are undone for ever. While you are on this ſide of the Grave, you have time to read, to hear, to pray, but when this time is done it ſhall be ſo no more: You ſhall riſe from death to judgement, according as you have led your life here, you ſhall have your reward hereafter: now you may enquire of your friends and teachers what you ſhould do to be ſaved: and you may receive particular inſtructions, and exhortations, and God may bleſs the endeavors of thoſe who are aſſiſting to you in the work ſo far, that your poor ſoul may be ſaved: but when life is paſt, it will be ſo no more. Had hell but ſuch an offer as this, and if any cries would procure it from their righteous judge; O what a chang would there be among them: how importunately would they cry to God, O ſend us once again upon the earth, once more let us ſee the face of mercy, and hear the tenders of Chriſt and ſalvation, once more let the Miniſters of the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt afford us their help, and teach in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon, once more let us have the help and company of thy Saints, and we will ſcorn them,

abuse them, and persecute them no more; that we might once more be admitted into the holy assemblies, and have the Lords days to spend in the business of our salvation! It makes my heart even tremble to think how these poor damned souls would strive with God to try them once again, if they had but any encouragements of hope; but it cannot be, it will not be, they had their day, they cannot lose their time, and have it; they had faithful guides, and would not follow them: long did Christ wait with the patient tenders of his blood and spirit; his grace was offered, but it would not be accepted. Such mouths must be stopped for ever with a (Remember thou in thy life time received thy good things, Luke 16. 2.)

If ever you will repent and believe, it must be Now or never. If ever you will be converted and sanctified, it must be, Now or never. If ever you will be pardoned and reconciled to God, it must be now. O that you were wise that you understood this, and that you would consider your latter end, Deut. 31. 29.

O Let me intreat you to let the words of our blessed redeemer sink into your hearts, Luk. 19. 41, 42. If thou hadst known, even thou in this thy day, the things that do belong unto thy peace, but now they are hidden from thine eyes.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, as there is no return after this life, to live upon the earth, so there will be no doing this work hereafter; Heaven is for a more glorious work, and hell will be for most horrible punishments: It is now that you must sow, and hereafter that you must reap: it is now that you must work, and then that you must receive your wages. O therefore poor soul, where ever thou dost abide, let me perswade thee to be up and be doing; be not like the children of Israel, who murmured and repined at the providence of God, because they did not inherit the Land of promise presently, but do thou patiently wait Gods time, and be thou never idle, but still setting forward to the heavenly Canaan, that so thou mayest be ready when God shall please to call thee to the inheritance thereof.

Let me lay before you your duties by way of motives in some few particulars, to begin with the lowest of all: then

First, In the works of your bodily calling you must use diligence; In the sweat of your brow you must eat your bread, Gen. 3. 19. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do, Exod. 20. 9.

Success is Gods ordinary reward of temporal diligence, and diseases, poverty, and shame are the usual punishments of the slothful.

Secondly,

Secondly, Are you parents or governors of families; you have work to do for God, and for the souls of them that God hath intrusted with you. Be diligent in family duties: remember that you and your families are going to the grave, where you have heard there is no work; therefore what you do must be Now or never, to day, while it is called to day, neglect not any work which will forward you to Heaven.

Thirdly, Have you ignorant or ungodly neighbours, whose misery calls for your compassion? speak to them, and keep them with all diligence, loose not any opportunity of doing good while you are alive: do what thou canst to keep thy ignorant neighbour from eternal death, for when thou art in the grave, thou canst do no good: up therefore and be doing with all your might.

Fourthly, Hath the Lord lent you riches in the world, he doth expect then that thou shouldest relieve those that are in want, especially do good to those that are of the houshold of faith. Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days. Do good before thy heart be hardned, thy riches blasted & consumed, thy opportunities taken away, part with it, before it part with thee.

Fifthly, Hath God intrusted you with power, O then seek to promote the glory of God, re-

relieve the oppressed, right the widow and the fatherless, cherish them that do well, be a terror to them that are evil: Let those that work the work of the Lord be with you, without fear, 1 Cor. 16. 10.

Sixthly, To come a little nearer to you yet: Are any of you yet in the state of nature born only of the flesh, and not of the spirit? Make out to Christ, call mightily to him: for there is no Conversion or Repentance unto life in the grave, whether thou goest, if ever thou wilt be saved, thou must do it. Now or Never.

Seventhly, Hast thou any predominant sin that over-ruleth thee, or that woundeth thee, or keepeth thee off from being acquainted with God: strive to resist those things, abhor them in thy very thoughts, hate the door of the harlot, or the Ale-house, where thou formerly hast committed many grievous sins.

Eighthly, Art thou in a declining condition, hast thou lost thy first desires and love? O then, up and be doing thy first works, and remember from whence thou art fallen: cry out with Job, Job 26. 2,3,4,5. O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me, when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness, as I was in the days of my youth

Youth, when the secret of God was on my Tabernacle, when the Almighty was yet with me.

Ninthly, Art thou in ignorance concerning thy converted estate, dost thou not know whether thou art in a state of life or death? be thou careful then, and use the means that God hath appointed thee for assurance, search the Scriptures, for in them are the words of eternal life: Examine your selves whether you be in the faith, prove your selves, know you not your own selves that Christ is in you except you be reprobates? 2 Cor. 13. 5.

Lastly, in all the duties of thy calling, whether Civil or Religious, seek to inflame thy soul with the love of God, admire his mercies. O taste and see that the Lord is gracious, let his fear command thy soul, and trust in him alone, cast all thy care and thy self upon him. When thou art reading of the word, have an obedientiall fear and love to it, and let it be sweeter to thee than the hony-comb, resolve to do what thou therein findest to be the will of God.

Thus I have shewed thee, O poor Soul, in some measure what is thy duty to do, but these are but short hints to what might be laid down: but I must be short, because there are some other things of great concernment to thy poor soul, to speak something to before

I come to a conclusion: And that I may not leave a poor soul in darkness, there are some few particulars that I would perswade a Christian to: the first is this.

First, let me beg of thee to live as one that believeth there is a God, and that this God is the Creator, Lord, and Ruler of the whole world: Believe that this God is Almighty, and that the greatest of men are less than worms in comparison to this great God. Believe that God is wise, powerful, and that he is able to save thee; and as he is able, so he is willing, if thou by a true and lively faith dost lay hold on him: O live in the belief of this.

Secondly, Live as one that doth believe Mankind is fallen into sin and misery, and that all men are under the condemnation of the Law of God, till they are delivered, and live as men that consider that there must be a great change wrought in you before you come to dye.

Thirdly, Live as men that verily and truly believe that you are Redeemed by Jesus Christ, who hath suffered for your sins, and brought the glad tydings of Salvation to your poor soul: O believe in this Christ, and lay hold on all the precious promises that are in the Gospel: O cast your selves upon him who is the physitian of your poor sould.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Believe that the Holy Ghost is given by Jesus Christ to conquer, to quicken, to sanctifie all that he will save: and that except you be born of the spirit, you shall never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and that, If any man have not the spirit of Christ, the same is none of his, Rom. 8. 9.

Fifthly, Live in this belief, that sin is the greatest evil, and that which doth give the greatest offence to the Great and Holy God, and that it is the evil which the Lord abhorreth.

Sixthly, Believe that this sin will not be pardoned without repentance, and this must be true repentance also; which if it be so, it will not let thee live in any gross sin.

Seventhly, Live as members of the Church of Christ, having Communion with his Saints, and live as those that believe there is a life everlasting, where the sanctified shall live in endless joy, and the wicked in everlasting woe.

Lastly, Live as those that Believe that this life is given only to make preparation for a better: All that ever shall be done for your salvation, must be Now or Never. Live and believe that the world and the flesh are the deadly Enemies of your Salvation: If ye live after the flesh, ye shall dye after it, but if by the spirit ye mortifie the deeds of

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the body, ye shall live, Rom. 8. 13.

Christians, let me tell you, that in all undertakings your only aim should be the glory of God, and you ought to do every thing with an obedient fear, knowing that there is none in heaven nor upon earth that can save your Souls, but the great God of Heaven and Earth. To this obedience let me perswade you in a few particulars.

First, The Work of God must be done with fear and reverence: God will be sanctified of all that draw near him, God will be served as God, and not as man. God will not be prayed to with a regardless mind. It is a dreadful thing for poor dust and ashes to speak to such a great God, but it is a dangerous thing to speak slightly and irreverently of him: it concers every believing soul to have more of the fear of God upon his heart, then the common People of the World have, for they that have tasted that the Lord is gracious, have great cause to have a reverential fear of his name.

Secondly, It is requisite that you be very serious & sober in all your services you perform to God; be fervent and serious in seeking of God, and your own salvation.

Thirdly, Let your services to the Lord be performed with an understanding heart: God delights not in the blind devotion of

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Men that know not what they do. Prayers not understood are not Prayers, for no mans desires goes beyond his knowledge, & he expresseth not his desire, that knoweth not what he expresseth: if understanding be necessary in our common discourse, much more in our addresses to the most high. A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit, but God hath no pleasure in fools, Prov. 27. 27.

Fourthly, God is a spirit, and he must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, *John* 4. 25. The Father seeketh such to worship him. God calleth for the heart, he looketh upon the inward desires of the soul, if that be right, all will be well.

Fifthly, The body hath its part in the service of God as well as the soul, the body must express the inward reverence and devotion of the Soul: there ought to be a very decent behaviour in every child of God at all times; but especially when he is about any Work that concerns his souls health.

Sixthly, God will be served with purity and holiness: God abhorreth the sacrifices of the Wicked and disobedient, those that serve him must have undefiled garments, they must put on the white robe of Christs Righteousness.

Seventhly, God will be served universally and intirely in all his commands, and with

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all your faculties; your works of Piety, Justice, and Charity must never be separated: God will be served with love and delight. O dear Christians consider what a glorious priviledge the Saints have, who live always in the joys of the Lord, and truly a believer hath great cause of joy, and the chief cause of his joy is, that his sins are pardoned, that God is reconciled to him in Jesus Christ, he hath the promises of God, that all things shall work together for his good, even his greatest sufferings. He is always in the care of a tender father, and he hath leave to draw near unto him, and open his heart to him in prayer, even in the greatest straits and wants that can come to him.

I have thus in brief and short Discourse laid down in some particulars, the duty of every poor Soul that would have an interest in Christ Jesus, and I would it were the Lords good pleasure that I could perswade any poor Soul to be desirous and diligent in attaining to that happiness, which is to lay hold upon Jesus Christ, and to rely only upon him; O Christian, cast thy self and all that is thine upon the shoulders of him who is able to bear thee, and he is willing for to bring thee through all difficulty, if so be thou art willing to leave thy sins, and repent thee of thine iniquities.

If any man hath an ear to hear, let him hear: O dear Christians consider these words, now is the time that you are called upon, now while you have opportunities, now hear the word preached by the faithful Ministers of the Gospel, lest by death you are snatcht away, and then it will be too late.

Now you have abundance of private helps, now you have the Lords day to spend in holy exercises, for the edification of your precious souls, now you have choice and serious books to meditate on; and blessed be the Lord, you have the protection of a Christian King: O these are great mercies, and we do not know how long or how little while we may enjoy them! O therefore make use of time, for this time will not last always, therefore, Now or Never work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Consider the words of the Apostle Peter, in the second Epistle, the first Chap. and the tenth verse: Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your Calling and Election sure, for if ye do these things ye shall never fall. In these words there is the Christians duty laid down in the former part of the verse, in these words: Wherefore the rather brethren give diligence; then in the succeeding words are the Reasons laid down, wherefore this diligence is required, and

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that is, to make your calling and election sure: then in the last clause of the verse, there is a gracious promise to all that are diligent in this work: For if you do these things you shall never fall. O what comfortable Words are these to a poor soul, who strives to attain to this work, who is diligent in working out his salvation with fear and trembling! O let us labour earnestly for the true faith, that we may attain to some assurance of our salvation: Let us consider and meditate upon these words of the Apostle Paul, Heb. 10. 21, to 25. the words are these: And having an High-Priest over the House of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our heart sprinkled from an evil Conscience, and our Bodies washed with pure water: Let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promiseth, and let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works.

Beloved, These things must be done now, or else when we have lost our season, it will be too late. Before I come to a full conclusion, I will once again perswade thee to a holy life, for fear thou art overtaken with an untimely death: I call that untimely death, that is, if thou art not prepared for it: we have not so much cause to fear death, as we

ought to bewail our wicked life; It is too common a reception amongst many, that Death puts a period to all our trouble; (A short Life and a sweet Life, being the vulgar Proverb) the sence of their pain more than the desires of their being freed from their sins inviting the hastiness of their Lips. I confess it is a happiness to dye indeed, if we are fitted for death, if we die with a Conscience void of offence towards all men; but alas, if otherwise, our Corporal Death is but a separation of soul and body; death is common to the good, as well as to the bad, to the Prince as well as the Peasant, as the Woman of Tekoa told David, We must all die, and are as the water spilt upon the ground that cannot be gathered up again, 2 Sam. 14. 14.

We must all dye

But who is it that truly considers the fearful separation of soul and body from the gracious presence of a merciful God? who is it that would not here live in a Prison, a dungeon, a sink of sin, rather than in a palace of Royal freedom? O Lord, who is it that doth not tremble to think upon this fearful parting? whose heart doth not ake within him to think upon that woful sentence of condemnation, Mat. 24. 15. Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire? this will be a sad parting to all those who have not tasted the

Lord is gracious, and who have not laboured with diligence, to make their calling and election sure: consider of it poor soul, whether thou art one that remainest in an unregenerate estate, whether it be not thy chief concern to be earnest with God in prayer, and in all other duties of a Christian, now while thou hast health in this life, lest when thou come to die, death prove an eternal death to thy soul: I do not mean that thy soul can die; but when the soul and body part, thy soul will be eternally burning in hell fire, and never die. O let the consideration of the shortness of this life stir thee up to a preparation for death, that whensoever it comes upon thee, it may not come unawares to thee, but be thou ready to embrace death, and say, Come Lord Jesus come quickly.

What are Honours, Beauty, Riches, high places, wit, strength, friends, are they not empty vials? are they not common to the wicked as well as the good. Surely they cannot help, they cannot satisfie in the evil day: when death comes all will forsake thee, and prove but as miserable comforters, and deceitful friends; therefore Now or Never is the time for thee to work in. O let thy soul take heed in time, let not the love of the World bewitch thee: die thou must, it cannot be avoided, but when, thou knowest not.

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All the days of thy appointed time thou shalt wait, till thy change come, Job 14. 15. Can that tenant be light at heart that knows he shall quickly be turned out of doors, & hath no place provided, wherein he may put his head? Or canst thou eat, or drink, or sleep quietly, and art no way assured of a better dwelling, when this earthly house of thy Tabernacle here shall be dissolved? O poor soul be no longer deluded, be no longer so desperate as to hazard thy eternal happiness for the shadows of pleasure, for the shadows of profit, which are all but vanity and vexation of spirit.

To conclude then dear Christians, let me exhort you in the fear of the Lord, to a serious diligence in seeking those things which conduce to the happiness of your poor souls: what though persecutions arise, be not troubled: persecution is the crown and rejoycing of a true Christian. Our Saviour pronounceth them happy who forsake Father and Mother, or Land, or any thing for his names sake: as tribulations abounds, so do our consolations, our enemies being instruments of comforting us, by afflicting us: What creature then should be more joyful than a Christian? for God the creator he is comforting us, while the creature is afflicting us: be not impatient then, O suffering soul, at the rage and

malice

malick of the greatest adversary thou canst have, since by the enjoyment of our heavenly Father, we are more than conquerours. Account it thy greatest benefit to lye down patiently in the bed of affliction, where Christ rests himself with thee in some gracious visitation: yea he will visit thee with abundance of consolation, and then thou shalt account thy self to be a gainer, if thy afflictions have been so great as to bring forth an eternal reward of joy and blessedness.

To bring all then to a Conclusion, let the consideration of all the foregoing benefits, which thou wilt attain unto by serious diligence in the practice of Holiness, excite thee Now or Never to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

FINIS.

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